the quota system prevailing in European countries to increase exports of textiles to those countries;

(b) if so, when such discussions were held and at what levels; and

(c) the reasons that the quota system is still prevailing in these countries for export of textiles and by when it will come to an end under the WTO agreement?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Textile imports in the European Union (EU) are governed by bilateral quotas under the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA), which has since 1.1.1995, become part of the Agreement on Textiles & Clothing (ATC) contained in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round negotiations of the GATT. As per ATC, all quotas governing the textiles and clothing trade would be phased out by 1st January 2005.

Use of synthetic textile fibres

*407. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether India shares the worldwide concern for environmental problems in relation to the use of synthetic textile fibres;

(b) if so, whether Government have any plan to derive maximum advantage in export market by developing better jute fibres; and

(c) if so, the details of programmes being pursued by Government?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) to (c) No environmental problem is reported in respect of use of synthetic textile fibres. In order to derive maximum advantage in the export market, Government has been taking various steps to promote diversified jute products, including jute thermoplastic composite, jute geotextiles, jute carpets and floor coverings and food grade jute bags through R&D, technology transfer and export promotion activities.